Citation: Hadjievska, I. (2022). Book review: Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska and Ljupcho S. Risteski (eds.), *Cultures and politics of remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan perspectives.* *Colloquia Humanistica*, *2022*(11), Article 2822. https://doi.org/10.11649/ch.2822

Colloquia Humanistica 11 (2022)
The Sense of an Ending and the Imagination of the End: Apocalypse, Disaster and Messianic Time
Article No. 2822
https://doi.org/10.11649/ch.2822

COLLOQUIA HUMANISTICA

Ivana Hadjievska

The State Archives of North Macedonia – Section in Bitola, North Macedonia
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0992-2859
ivana01hadjievska@gmail.com

Book review: Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska and Ljupcho S. Risteski (eds.), *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives*. Skopje: forum ZFD, 2021, 132 pp. ISBN 978-608-4956-04-4

Abstract

This presentation reviews a recent volume in the field of memory studies, focusing on Balkan historical experiences and perspectives, edited by Naum Trajanovski (PhD in sociology), Petar Todorov (PhD in history, Institute of National History in Skopje), Biljana Volchevska (NGO programme coordinator and PhD candidate in philosophy) and Ljupčo S. Risteski (professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Skopje). The volume was published in 2021 by the civil peace organisation Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst, Skopje branch, and researched within the framework of a project aimed at creating a platform for the collaboration of academic workers during the pandemic, in 2020. In 12 texts, the authors explore regional and local conflicts and reconciliation processes in Southeast Europe. The common characteristic of all the texts in the publication is the prevailing and almost didactically positioned awareness of epistemic problems in memory studies

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 PL License (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited. © The Author(s), 2022.
Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences
Editor-in-chief: Jolanta Sujecka
Conception and academic editing: Ewa Niedziałek

and historiography – a cohesive aspect of the volume that continuously attracted my attention...

Keywords: culture of remembrance, memory politics, Balkans.

In this presentation of the volume *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives* (Trajanovski et al., 2021), I give an overview of its content together with my added commentary, focusing on aspects that especially define its *researcher's letter*, epistemically, methodologically, but also philosophically. According to my critical reading, the defining markers of the volume are the internationalised locus of the book and the engaged critique and raised awareness of the traditional ways of nation-centred knowledge production.

At the same time, I am careful not to read the volume as if it had been produced in an ideal academic vacuum. As a reader and commentator, I also bear in mind the uncontrolled influences that surrounded the work when it was created: the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the grim atmosphere that had risen around EU values and ideas after the Bulgarian veto over North Macedonia's EU accession in 2020.

The two aforementioned influences are present in research work in two ways: as *techne* that changed the workspace for academic workers (reducing gatherings, changing fieldwork, changing the organisation of national remembrance events, influencing institutional accessibility etc.); and in terms of *idea currency* and "academic trends": history and memory politics, historical disputes and "wars" over master narratives coming from countries in Southeast Europe and the Balkan Peninsula spread the "virus" of accelerated "general politicisation of history" (Pierre Nora). For knowledge to prevail in such times, new communities must be formed, where researchers can overcome the challenges of social distance and epistemic loneliness. This kind of platform was found in the somewhat still unorthodox (for traditional institutional state-bound academia) alliance between the civil sector and academic research. These alliances usually mean engaging academic legitimacy in policy currents, or working with primary focus groups, usually in a project framework.

The Skopje branch of the civil peace and activist organisation Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst initiated the project *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance in Southeast Europe: Nationalism, Transnationalism and Cooperation* in 2019 and, together with two academic institutions: the Institute of National History – Skopje and the Institute for Ethnology

and Anthropology in North Macedonia, both part of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, provided a platform for the researchers' (online) conferencing[1] and for the writing of the volume.

The publication consists of 12 separate texts written by 13 authors, mostly coming from academic but also – in fewer cases – from independent and activist-cum-research environments. I can say that the authors are positioned much more in transnational academic and research networks ("academic diaspora"), rather than locally bound to national scientific and/or educational institutions, even if they live and work in the context of their national origin. I think that this is an important observation, especially when the research topic is in the field of history and deals with a critical approach to memory politics in the context of national narratives about the past. The volume is conceptualised and edited by Naum Trajanovski (PhD in sociology, Graduate School for Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences), Petar Todorov (PhD in history, Institute of National History in Skopje), Biljana Volchevska (NGO programme coordinator and PhD candidate in philosophy) and Ljupčo S. Risteski (professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Skopje).

In the Introduction the editors explain that their original idea was to organise a two-day conference in Skopje dedicated to cultures of memory, memory politics and various (ab)uses of history in and beyond the region of Southeast Europe, but due to the pandemic in mid-2020, the idea was adopted to edit the conference texts in a volume, with the project aim of "better public dissemination of the expert opinions" (p. 10). Further on, they explain that the aim of the research process itself is to

> [reach] beyond the prevailing public *Floskeln* and present some of the under-discussed mnemonic cases, mechanisms and history- and memory-related socio-political trajectories in the region. The number of texts dealing with

[1] Two online panel discussions were organised and streamed live on the official social media of the organisation forumZFD, titled "Cultures and Politics of Remembrance Beyond Southeast Europe". The first panel treated the Balkan region as "a great research environment for the various cultures of memory, historiographies and modes of dealing with the pasts". World-acclaimed academic researchers (like Keith Brown) participated in the social analysis of the topic. See: forumZFD – Macedonia Program, 2020a. The second panel focused on current socio-political developments in the region concerning the politics of memory and the (ab)use of history in our contemporary societies. Regionally relevant and expert speakers brought their local experiences and narratives to the discussion. See: forumZFD – Macedonia Program, 2020b.

> the Bulgarian-Macedonian history affairs, thus, is one such metric which was hard to be overlooked in terms of editing this volume at the given point in time. (p. 10)

Content-wise, the texts are not divided into sections, but their organisation does follow the above-mentioned editorial concept, namely presenting expert analyses in three main realms of thought on the volume's topic: mnemonic mechanisms, history-related case studies, and applied reconciliation trajectories in the region. The first two texts are dedicated to, or inspired by, the Macedonian-Bulgarian conflict over history. The next two texts are sharp theoretical mirrors on crucial aspects of post-Yugoslav histories, mostly the legacies of anti-fascism. The following texts, up till the end, are local case studies from various places on the Balkan Peninsula. The case studies are taken from different historical contexts, coming from Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Greece. Specific ethnicities that have been covered by the case studies relevant to the volume's topic are Romani Muslims, Macedonian Albanians and ethnic Macedonians from northern Greece. The last text weaves between the fields of memory studies and policy studies, smartly suggesting a need for connecting knowledge results produced in the humanities with the realm of applied institutional policies.

The dense network of sub-topics that emerges from the scope of the research is organised by the editorial concept into two main and opposing analytical discourses: "the transnational turn" and "the nationalistic turn" in the social sciences, and the critique of the so-called methodological nationalism:

> […] there is nothing wrong, from an analytical perspective, in pursuing a study of a certain national feature, domain or instance; or ascribing an agency to and researching a particular national institution, actor or event. What seems to be problematic – from normative and analytical standpoints – is the process of weaponisation of national history and memory politics; or, in the words of Pierre Nora, the process of "general politicisation of history". This process was depicted as a legitimation-seeking, value-based endeavour at the two discussions, and observed as a certain "nationalistic turn" – a trajectory which stands in tension with the aforementioned "transnational turn". (p. 11)

The editors summarise the objective of the volume as showcasing various nuances of the processes of memorialisation, historical knowledge production, and politicisation of history and memory in the Balkans. Thus, the method of case studies is maintained throughout the volume as the most suitable way of delivering the discussion as an expert opinion. Nevertheless, the case-study approach in this NGO-platformed academic endeavour

is not maintained in the form of data harvesting from the European periphery and its transposition into theory and knowledge production in the European centre. Quite the opposite: the platform fostered space for authors to develop or present their theoretical creations and solutions in direct correlation with the locus of their research. I consider this a really important practice not only for the career of a researcher, but even more so for the studied places, communities, events and people from the Balkans – be it in a geographical sense or in the sense of imagology. In the following part I will offer a commentary on every text in the publication, with a special accent on novel theoretical approaches and the presence of the volume's defining markers explained in the introduction.

1. The book opens with a text by eminent historian Stefan Troebst, titled "The Resurfacing of the *Titanic* in the Balkan Bermuda Triangle: Political Conflicts over History between Sofia, Skopje and Athens before and after 1989". The text focuses on national myths in historical narratives and their conflicted twists between neighbouring countries: Bulgaria-Macedonia, Greece-Macedonia, and Greece-Bulgaria. A summary statement from the author contains ideas appropriate for the volume's opening text:

> In the search for orientation in a drastically changed international and subregional environment concepts like "national identity" defined by "national history" appeared as reliable landmarks. This naturally implied that the rivalling and, more often than not, contradictory concepts of the neighbours' "national identity" and "national history" had to be delegitimised, preferably with arguments produced by one's own professional historians. Whereas the "historiographical warfare" between Sofia and Skopje of the time before 1989/91 simply went on, a new front opened between Skopje and Athens/Thessaloniki – a bad surprise for both sides involved. (p. 16)

Troebst dedicates separate sections to an analysis of each of the three bilateral crises. As the main reference points of historical perspective, he uses the Cold War, socialism, and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Those points create a "Bermuda triangle" where history can easily err in a variety of myths and conspiracies. Beyond the clever metaphors, the author's academic potency lies in his clarity when stating the connection between the official academic elites and the new orientations towards the national identity in all of the examined nation-states, where the sacralisation of history was mostly used as a solution to the bilateral challenges in the new geopolitical picture on the Balkan Peninsula after 1989.

2. The next text in the volume is by Tomasz Kamusella and follows the opening piece in investigating the present Macedonian-Bulgarian

history/historiography affair. Under the straightforward title "The 2019 Bulgarian Ultimatum in Comparison", the author reviews the demands from the Bulgarian ultimatum issued on the threshold of the Macedonian EU accession process. His analysis is a comparative one, using historical and contemporary examples. The anchor example in his comparison is language nationalism and its consequences in the historical relationships between Austria and Germany. The analysis is directed towards proposing models for "overcoming the inherent divisiveness of ethnolinguistic nationalism, which dominates elsewhere across central Europe as the leading ideology of statehood creation" (p. 23). One methodologically interesting and original segment in this text is the author's proposition that, as in the model of the "bilingual nation of Finlanders", the same model of polity can be successfully emulated in North Macedonia: "the country's Albanian (Albanian-speaking) and Macedonian (Slavic-speaking) communities – alongside Romani- and Turkish-speakers – may meld into a uniformly bilingual nation of Macedoners. It is their country that determines the national identity of the Finlanders rather than a language. The same may become true in the case of the potential Macedoners" (p. 23). The author's argumentation digs deeper into one aspect of the Macedonian-Bulgarian bilateral affair that was mostly marginalised in the broader discussion: although the problem (hate towards Bulgaria fostered in national historical narratives) concerns a neighbouring state (North Macedonia), the core of the problem is actually internal, Bulgarian; it is about nationalism, language policy and politics of history (*Geschichtspolitik*).

The book continues with a series of texts dedicated to memory politics applied to Yugoslav anti-fascism and post-Yugoslav national identities. As I understand it, the underlying premise in the following two texts is the need for disclosure of anti-intellectual approaches in the remembrance of anti-fascist aspects of socialist Yugoslavia. Another shared aspect is the authors' effort to explain the curious case of oblivion of workers' history, as well as the academic historical revisionism towards it, as a consequence of the pursuit of new national identities in post-Yugoslav societies after the political and economic transition in the 1990s.

3. These topics are considered by Ljubica Spaskovska in her text "The 'Heteroglossia' of Loss – Memory, Forgetting and (Post) Socialist Citizenship". The main focus is on the process of "unmaking of socialist citizenship". Her theoretical perspective is three-layered and involves an analysis through three aspects of "the symbolic spaces of socialist citizenship": anti-fascism and its transnational sites of memory; internationalism

and non-alignment; self-management and labour. The argumentation is focused on the re-scripting and repurposing of Yugoslav anti-fascism narratives to fit the new (ethno-)national narratives and political agendas (this part communicates well with a text further on in the volume – by Mariglen Demiri). An academically potent discussion using various examples follows, as the author frames her thesis about the process of "silencing of the (Yugoslav) past", which resulted in the ominous locking away of local knowledge about the self-management organisation of the Yugoslav economy. The points used in the argumentation are well described with the language of historiography, and also backed up with a wide range of regional case-study example summaries. Beyond the clear methodological framework, the author places a bold statement that opens a new avenue for further discussion when she connects post-Yugoslav historical revisionism with anti-intellectualism.

4. The next text, written by Tanja Petrović, follows a similar line of thought as Spaskovska's piece, on complex tangents between memory politics and historical revisionism *via* post-Yugoslav narratives and identities. I see the "culmination" of the volume's objective precisely in the title: "When Che Guevara Visited Yugoslavia: On Possibilities of Remembering in the Aftermath of the Yugoslav Socialist Project". Petrović uses a unique and effective way of grasping her topic "aside from its obvious relevance for diplomatic history". Using an essayistic take on the different temporalities created by the plain historical event of Che's visit to Yugoslavia in 1959, the author identifies the different meanings of the analysed event, both in history and culture, showing us how far the agents of historical memory are intertwined in our general culture and understanding of temporalities. That is why I consider this text to be an excellent *mittelpunkt* of the volume. The author argues that this event – Che's visit to socialist Yugoslavia – is defined by two subsequent events and processes: Che Guevara's death in Bolivia and the mythologisation of his persona, and the catastrophic end of Yugoslavia and its socialism:

> Both these processes make it difficult to look at Che Guevara's visit to Yugoslavia as an event unfolding in its own temporality, rendering visions of the future inherent to that temporality invisible or significantly deformed. Public narratives of the past, through which we collectively remember, need to be attentive to these lost visions of the future, or the future's past, as they are of crucial importance for being able "to think productively about the temporality of past–present–future". Social and political conditions of our present make the possibilities of imagining a future rather scarce. In the "desert of post-socialism" […]. (p. 42)

To argue further about remembering events from socialist Yugoslavia with the erasure of "the humanist and modernist horizons shaped by the socialist project in the Second World", the author goes beyond the historiographic line involving Che Guevara. She uses local examples of Second World War partisans turned prolific political workers. The case of partisan and politician Rupena Osolnik shows how the agents of historical memory after the change of the system re-evaluated their social roles and took only the partisan role as authentic (although, in a rather mythologised way), almost erasing the social agency of the person as a political worker in many institutions in society. That is exactly what I, as a historian, would call the function of the explicit marginalisation and/or oblivion of the socialist policies and historical experiences from the period of socialist self-management. Petrović cleverly succeeds in bringing awareness of the patterns of public discourses on the past in post-socialist times simply by highlighting the gaze of the (hegemonic) historical observer.

All the subsequent texts represent local case studies from various places and contexts on the Balkan Peninsula.

5. The next text in the volume, "'Mixing the Dough for the Bread of Reconciliation': Croat-Serb Relations and Croatia's Commemorative Culture" by Vjeran Pavlaković, an eminent historian specialising in memorials and monuments, covers the topic of memory politics and commemoration practices on the local/national level. This contribution seeks to examine the dramatic change in the commemorative culture in Croatia through the lens of one of the key memorial days related to the Croatian War of Independence. The focus is on the troubled local war memories in the city of Knin – the central stage for the official commemoration/celebration of Operation Storm from 1995. "In Knin, on a day that Croats perceive as a day of celebration, and Serbs as a day of mourning, these two opposing feelings are turned into flour and water" (p. 54). He uses the metaphor of the "bread of reconciliation" (*pogača pomirenja*) to describe how the local practices of commemorating the important and symbolically burdened war event have changed through the decades, and how bottom-up and top-down commemorative practices and memory policies have come into collision and affected the meanings of the event and the political ritual that surrounds it. The author argues and shows with examples how the last commemoration has challenged the ongoing nationally exclusive memory politics that have perpetuated the post-war divisions, and how local bottom-up practices of joint Serbian and Croatian remembrance actors have fostered reconciliation, which the author also judges as

"a new culture of remembrance". Another epistemic advancement in this research can be found in the author's notice of the pandemic's effects on the last celebration and how the restrictions on large gatherings "helped" with the improvement of the reconciliation: keeping to a more rigorous protocol that engaged the good-faith remembrance actors, and keeping out nationalistic crowds burdening the event with warlord symbolics. Accordingly, he points out that after 2020 "commemorations, along with all aspects of public life, would be dramatically changed" (p. 60).

6. The next text goes deeper into dismantling the pathos nested in canonised historical pieces important for establishing historiographical institutions of the nation. Zrinka Blažević's paper "Tears and Memories of the Nation: Poetics of Memory and Aesthetics of Mourning in the First Croatian National Epos" scrutinises the poetic strategies and aesthetic dimensions of the culture of memory in the first Croatian national epos, *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo* [Two Centuries of Croatia Mournful] written by Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713), published in Zagreb in 1703. The author highlights the most important tropes in national romantic poetics and explains how cultural tropes (mostly patriarchal ones) become embedded in the culture of memory during nation-building processes. In the words of the author, "the personified homeland of Croatia […] is metaphorically identified with a woman-mother who represents a type of 'ego history of mourning' during the two centuries of Ottoman conquests" (p. 64). This text can also work as a universal, clear-cut "textbook example" of how political elites have used the capacity of monumental poetic works for cultural and ideological mobilisation. The paper is composed of three main parts in which the author explains (1) the genre characteristics of the national epos – the bricks that build a coherent and monumental narrative; (2) the structural characteristics of the national epos – the embodiment of rigorous tropes of heroes and traitors, *pater-patriae* and enemies; and (3) the political characteristics of the epos – the traits of political and cultural intimacy that emerge from the cultural distribution of the "memories of the Nation" ("the transformation of individual passion into a collective inspiration for action"). After the characterisation of the epos, the author gives us an important commentary on the articulation of the epos in Croatian history textbooks. The awareness brought by the ideas outlined in this text is highly relevant, as today's national narratives strongly resemble the poetic and pathos-filled language of the national narrative articulated in *Croatia Mournful*.

7. The next text, by Mariglen Demiri, is titled "ASNOM and Self-Determination: Nationalism and Populism through a Left-Wing Perspective".

Content-wise, I find this text compatible with the section of the volume dealing with the cultural entanglement of national master narratives, especially their symbolic capital, with the establishing and rule of post-socialist political elites. In such a context, I can distinguish the author's main thesis: the application of the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM) as a memorial and historical trope in the Macedonian political context following the Prespa Agreement (2018) and the Agreement with Bulgaria (2017). The author also holds a strong and unexamined premise: "The premise of this text is that the populist creation of enemy subjects (Bulgaria, Greece, international institutions) leads to the antagonisation of other internal contributors, such as the Albanians of Macedonia" (p. 71). One methodologically important aspect of the text to me is the author's epistemic awareness of the marginalisation of the discussion about the different ethnic historical experiences, from the socialist revolution in multicultural Macedonia after the Second World War, in the historical canon after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This academic and institutional behaviour in the field of history, argues the author, opened up a space for various kinds of political instrumentalisation of the anti-fascist narrative bond in Macedonian state-building history. Demiri's text communicates very well with the text by Spaskovska, especially as regards the "nationalisation of Yugoslav heritage" (Spaskovska) in the political language of the new political parties that emerged from nationalistic waters after Yugoslavia's dissolution (Demiri).

8. Filip Lyapov's text "Female Martyrs and Assassins: Local, National and Transnational Entanglements of Memory Politics in Contemporary Bulgaria" focuses on the different post-mortem memorialisation of three female assassins: Mencha Karnicheva, Mara Buneva and Violeta Yakova. He highlights the intertwining of regional, national and transnational dimensions of memory politics in Bulgaria, and illuminates the latest mainstreaming of nationalist discourses. The author follows the same line of inquiry as his preceding colleague in this volume (Demiri), researching the paths from the 1990s that slowly but steadily (and systematically) brought and managed oblivion regarding the (partisan) heroes of the communist regime as an abject past. Thus, the path was cleared for the memorialisation of new "heroes" through their ideological rehabilitation, as an "authentic", pure past. The gender perspective of the research is quite astonishing, as it pushes forward the need for awareness of gender prejudices in remembrance culture and the trope roles of women in nation-building narratives and in national martyrology. The consequence of the latter is that women are stripped of their

agency as historical figures. In that context, I must mention the richness of the text with its very valuable bibliography references in the field of women's history. Another important aspect in this particular research is the author's meticulous following of the various groups of "mnemonic warriors", usually positioned with a "bottom-up" agency. He provides examples of their activities associated directly with the historical persons under consideration. On a very important note, the term "historical revisionism" is used aptly by the author in the context of the political processes in Bulgaria after 1989 and the subsequent reformulation of collective identities after the fall of communism, as well as the elite's need for legitimising its power. The author sees the solution to this problem in problematising the "false dichotomy between martyrs" with educational frameworks and in the realm of public history, as well as in the creation of a more inclusive mnemonic culture instead of the never-ending *Kulturkampf*.

9. The next text, by Vasiliki P. Neofotistos, takes the discussion about the complex politics of memorialisation further into the material and symbolic world of cityscapes – to contemporary Skopje. The title of the text is "Commemoration and the Re-invention of a City: Alternative Memories of the Past in North Macedonia". It has a consistent ethnographic tone, which has the function of passing on dense fieldwork information to the reader as well as fostering an essayistic writing style that makes the academic condensation of the gathered information palpable – maybe the best solution when using fieldwork sources. The text is based on an ethnographic study conducted in the capital city of Skopje in the summer of 2012, during the building of the *Skopje 2014* nation-branding project by the then right-wing government led by VMRO-DPMNE. Although the project focused on ethnic Macedonian narratives and symbols, a parallel project was taking place at the same time in the centre of the city – Skanderbeg Square – dedicated to Albanian historical and national symbolic narratives, administered by the biggest Albanian coalition partners of the government. The author focuses on one event within the framework of the latter project, the 100th anniversary of the so-called liberation of Skopje (*çlirimi i Shkupit*) from Ottoman control in 1912. The author follows all the phases of the commemoration event. She is very successful in conducting her "archaeology of national commemorations" of the event she focuses on. She examines the public celebrations to commemorate

> for the first time on Sunday 12 August 2012, and every year after that. The celebrations were organised by the municipality of Čair, home to a large and predominantly

> Muslim Albanian population, in a broader context of struggles and contestations over who gets to shape the historic qualities of everyday life in Skopje and over who gets to be the rightful "owner" of the capital in the present. (p. 89)

Further on, she examines the rhetoric and performances used to commemorate the 1912 event against the historical record of the event itself. Also, she inquires into the wider socio-political circumstances and main actors surrounding the adoption of the practice of annual commemoration of this event. Her conclusions have an echoing effect as they pose the question of "the right to the city", and thus who controls the powerful tool of commemorations and national events/rituals.

10. Approaching the end of the book, we find Miladina Monova's text titled "The Possibilities of Memory: Resurrecting Communist Memories from the Greek Civil War in North Macedonia". I think that this text gives a good definition of the final section of the volume, as the author shows how individual narratives and "memory work" can open an avenue to multiple understandings of the past. Her focus is anti-fascist memories among Aegean Macedonians in North Macedonia. She perceives and examines the "memory work", i.e. the everlasting process of (re)evaluation of collective memory within changing "social frameworks". Precisely, Monova builds her argumentation on revisiting her past fieldwork and interviews with Macedonian refugees from the Greek Civil War and their narratives of war, exile, and resettlement. These narratives are examined and compared in the context of anti-communist movements after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and then in the contemporary socio-political framework of activist re-enactment of anti-fascist history in North Macedonia (especially after the Bulgarian veto over the country's EU accession). Methodologically speaking, the text is neatly embroidered with arguments about the epistemic and ethical challenges of the social and anthropological approach in memory studies – an important aspect for deeper and unbiased studies on historical "open wounds" dealing with ethnic displacement and humanitarian crises from recent history.

11. The volume also includes a text dedicated to one aspect of the under-researched history and culture of Romani people from the Balkans. Ksenia Trofimova titled her paper "Spiritual Continuity and the Way of Things: Discussing the Past while Creating Muslim Networks in Romani Communities". This ethnographic essay addresses the paths, networks and leaders of the spreading of the Sufi tradition among Roma Muslims and its institutionalisation in North Macedonia. The author reveals

"the templates used for self-representation – exclusion, social distance, mistrust and autonomy". Her argumentation is built on fieldwork and interviews with religious leaders who were direct participants in the spread of Sufi traditions among Roma Muslims, conducted in Skopje, Niš and Prizren between 2011 and 2019.

12. The volume's closing essay, "The Effects of Europeanisation on Memory Politics in the Balkans", is co-authored by Ana Milošević and Tamara Trošt, who discuss the regional "memory wars" between neighbouring Balkan countries that emerged during the process of their EU integration. In the first section of the text, the authors present an overview of the interaction between Europeanisation processes and memory politics in the Western Balkan states. In the second section, they introduce the idea of European memory and the European Memory Framework, and the bilateral challenges between member and accession states, strongly grounded in history politics. They explore the process of Europeanisation of memory politics by a detailed examination of what they smartly call "downloading and uploading European memory politics by the candidate states". They show that the pinnacle of that process (the EU's "waiting rooms") is experienced by the candidate countries in regressions and vetoes in the integration timeframes. In the third section, they examine the effects of the Europeanisation of memory politics, highlighting both positive effects and unintended consequences. One especially interesting sub-section in this inquiry is the division between the actors of the Europeanisation of memory, a division created by the political and cultural identities of the state and non-state actors, victim groups, survivors, together with academics, artists and activists. The research shows that this division usually forms two main groups: promoters of the European memory framework, open towards transnational narratives and reconciliation policies, and oppositionists of the EU integration process, prompted and scared by the prospect of change and erasures of their nationally framed historical and identity narratives.

The closing text communicates very well with the opening text – dealing with the symbolic aspects of regional memory and history disputes. Thus, it provides a good definition of the volume as a whole, bringing up the discussion about policies and values in Europe (mostly defined in the idea of the EU) and the "unbearable lightness" of hegemonic power relations between more and less powerful neighbouring European countries. The authors spot another consequence of the bilateral memory and history disputes within EU accession: most of these disputes have the power to (re)traumatise sensitive topics like the Holocaust, facts about the Second

World War and ethnic conflicts from the recent past, bluntly throwing the discussion into the realm of speculative daily politics.

The volume demonstrates clearly that there is a need to philosophically redefine education, formal and informal, on the culture of remembrance surrounding national (master) narratives. Why are national identities still the preferred locus in historical literature, not as just another part in the broad horizon of identities, but as some essential super-structures with the power to define a country's political pathways of development? Why are some parts of established academic circles in Southeast Europe megaphones of nationalistic narratives eroding neighbourly relations, as shown explicitly in the first two texts and sporadically in all the other texts in this volume? The authors find correlations in the behaviours of memory actors, "mnemonic warriors" and other circles of remembrance, connected with hate speech springing from historical debates, with the anti-intellectual atmosphere around history knowledge production. Another correlation to anti-intellectualism is found in the social top-down (institutional) processes that fostered historical revisionism after the fall of communism in Europe at the end of the 20th century. A destroyed education system and nationalistic political elites are part of that recipe in almost all the researched examples. A cohesive conclusion of the volume can be found in the omnipresent plea of all the participating researchers highlighting the need for redefining and refining the epistemic positions when dealing with the (national, cultural or religious) past. The first step is the very awareness of the non-ideal and non-romanticised condition of history as a discipline and the recognition of its (ab) use and weaponisation against the Other (*thy neighbour*). Thus, the volume is useful for students, educators and scholars willing to expand their thought horizons with diverse examples and methodology for "dealing with the past".

References

forumZFD – Macedonia Program. (2020a, September 10). *Panel discussion Vol. 1: Cultures and politics of remembrance beyond Southeast Europe* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab5ib5_MvJ8

forumZFD – Macedonia Program. (2020b, September 11). *Panel discussion Vol. 2: Culture and politics in Southeast Europe* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcjImJvgn9k

Trajanovski, N., Todorov, P., Volchevska, B., & Risteski, L. S. (eds.). (2021). *Cultures and politics of remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan perspectives.* forum ZFD.

Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska and Ljupcho S. Risteski (eds.), *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives.* Skopje: forum ZFD, 2021.

Ова е приказ на рецентниот зборник од областа на студиите на сеќавањето, фокусиран на балканските историски искуства и перспективи. Зборникот е уреден од Наум Трајановски (д-р по социологија), Петар Тодоров (д-р по историја, Институт за национална историја во Скопје), Билјана Волчевска (НВО-координатор и докторанд по филозофија) и Љупчо С. Ристески (професор на Институтот за етнологија и антропологија во Скопје). Зборникот е објавен во 2021 година од страна на граѓанската мировна организација ФорумЗФД – Скопје, а истражувањето е спроведено во рамките на проект насочен кон создавање платформа за соработка на академските работници за време на пандемијата, во текот на 2020 година. Во 12 текстови, авторите истражуваат регионални и локални конфликти и процеси на помирување во Југоисточна Европа. Заедничка карактеристика на сите текстови во публикацијата е преовладувачката и речиси дидактички позиционирана свест за епистемолошките проблеми во студиите на сеќавањето и историографијата. Токму тој кохезивен аспект кој преовладува во зборникот континуирано го привлекуваше моето внимание...

Клучни зборови: културна меморија, политики на сеќавање, Балкан.

Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska and Ljupcho S. Risteski (eds.), *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives.* Skopje: forum ZFD, 2021.

Niniejsza prezentacja jest recenzją tomu z dziedziny studiów nad pamięcią skoncentrowanego na bałkańskiej perspektywie doświadczania historii. Tom został edytorsko przygotowany przez doktora socjologii Nauma Trajanovskiego, doktora Petara Todorova z Instytutu Historii Narodowej w Skopje, doktorantkę Wydziału Filozofii, koordynatorkę programową NGO Biljanę Volčevską i profesora Ljupčo S. Risteskiego z Instytutu Etnologii i Antropologii w Skopje.

Tom został opublikowany w 2021 roku przez mieszczące się w Skopje odgałęzienie organizacji Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst i jest jednym z efektów badań prowadzonych w ramach projektu mającego na celu zbudowanie platformy współpracy pomiędzy pracownikami naukowymi w czasie pandemii 2020 roku.

W dwunastu tekstach autorzy badają regionalne i lokalne konflikty i procesy rekoncyliacyjne w Europie Południowo-Wschodniej. Wspólną cechą wszystkich tekstów zamieszczonych w tomie jest dominująca i ukierunkowana dydaktycznie świadomość problemów epistemologicznych [obecnych] w studiach nad pamięcią i historiografią. I właśnie ten dominujący i spajający wszystkie teksty aspekt nieustannie angażował moją uwagę…

Słowa kluczowe: pamięć kulturowa, polityki pamięci, Bałkany.

Przekład z języka macedońskiego
Jolanta Sujecka

Note

Ivana Hadjievska, Younger associate, The State Archives of North Macedonia – Section in Bitola, Macedonia Północna.
ivana01hadjievska@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0992-2859
The preparation of the article was self-funded by the author.
No competing interests have been declared.

Publication history

Received: 2022-05-02; Accepted: 2022-10-13; Published: 2022-12-21